



SHIRE OF WYNDHAM EAST KIMBERLEY  
**PLAYGROUND STRATEGY**  
**2022 - 2027**

## Executive Summary

Play is a fundamental right of children and should be preserved. Play enhances every aspect of children's development and learning, and it is through play that children learn to interpret and make sense of the world around them. Play is so important that its significance in children's lives is recognised by the United Nations as a specific right in addition to, and distinct from, a child's right to recreation and leisure. Play opportunities for children, along with their access to play environments, are impacted by social change and the built form.

Parks and playgrounds are becoming increasingly important for community recreation as areas become more urbanised, residential allotments decrease in size and natural play opportunities are lost to urban development.

Council is committed to providing playgrounds to enhance the health, well being and social connectedness of its community. The following recommendations have been developed with the aim of creating a system of playground networks that is built around a number of key criteria including cultural, built, natural and economic considerations.



## **CONTENT**

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Strategic Context</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>What you've said so far....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Cultural Environment</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Nature Environment</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Demographic</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Hierarchy and Distribution</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Amenities</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Built Environment</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Social Environment</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Social Environment</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>43</b>

## Strategic Context

### Community Vision

To be a thriving community with opportunities for all

### Community Mission

To develop in a manner that will achieve social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits for all.

**Focus Area 1** :People, Healthy vibrant active communities, Improving liveability through social and recreational opportunities, a range of inclusive community services and activities, and valuing our diversity.

Goal 1.2 Increase participation in sporting, recreation and leisure activities.

Collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders to advocate and provide accessible facilities that support a range of sporting and recreational activities.

### Community outcomes

- Active and healthy lifestyles
- Everyone can participate in accessible sport and recreational programs and facilities.

### Measures

- Community participation in recreation
- Satisfaction with programs, facilities and services provided

### Who will Contribute

- State Government
- \*Local Government will need to be the main Contributor to this process.





A key council strategy is 'People, Healthy vibrant active communities, Improving liveability through social and recreational opportunities, a range of inclusive community services and activities, and valuing our diversity.'. Council's commitment to playground development through this strategy is one of the building blocks towards making the Shire a place where children's right to play is valued and respected. This will happen best when areas are planned and designed for quality play and social opportunities for the whole community.

This involves the 'Collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders to advocate and provide accessible facilities that support a range of sporting and recreational activities.;; another key strategy outlined in the council plan. Appropriate community consultation is important in ensuring that the design of playgrounds responds to the wishes of the local community and users. By inviting input into such things as equipment mix and uses, council will provide facilities which better meet the needs of the local community as well as fostering a greater sense of ownership.

This document actions a plan to implement recommendations and works for a 10 year program. The plan of action outlines key actions to move the Shire forward in developing a system of playground networks that will ensure playgrounds become social hubs where people from all ages come together to enjoy the element of 'play'.

## Introduction

The purpose of the playground strategy is to provide council with a plan that will guide the planning and development of playgrounds now and into the future. Playgrounds provide an accessible child and family focused environment for participation and engagement in play and leisure. Council is committed to providing play spaces that are of a high quality and equitably distributed through our town sites.

The public 'play spaces' aim to serve a neighbourhood of people from different backgrounds and cultures. Play provides public places of interaction for both children and adults – a local place where a diverse range of cultures can be nurtured. Public spaces provide valuable opportunity for the development of informal community networks and dissemination of community information. The community building function can play a valuable role in new development areas where these community networks are not pre existing.

This strategy aims to address key issues such as playground planning, community consultation, provision, maintenance, accessibility and complementary facilities.





Council aims to develop playgrounds that will be:

- Designed to a high standard with diverse approaches and interesting, stimulating and fun play value;
- Safe and well maintained;
- Designed so that collectively children have access to an environment with sufficient diversity so their many individual needs are met;
- Accessible to children/parents with disabilities, their carers and families;
- Designed and located to compliment, enhance and celebrate the unique qualities of park locations;
- Equitably distributed throughout the Shire in accessible and inviting settings within 1000m walk of each household taking into account physical barriers to access such as roads and waterways;
- Inclusive of integrated artwork which adds value to the play experience;
- Inclusive of community ideas on their design;
- Environmentally sustainable where suitably durable and cost effective materials and processes are available;
- Inclusive of supporting amenities such as seating, paths and shade trees;
- Designed to be readily repaired and maintained.

## Starting from the beginning

The Shire is currently responsible for 15 public playgrounds across 11 locations, 5 in Wyndham and 6 in Kununurra. In the past, playground locations and layout have not been well thought out, planned or designed. Over the last 20 years, council has simply placed modular units on sites identified for playgrounds with little thought as to the user groups, surrounding facilities and needs of the overall community. This has seen the development of playgrounds with similar play features with little imagination and limited play value.

## What you've said so far....

Recent feedback from the MARKYT Community Scorecard, May 2021, identified key challenges relative to playgrounds as being;



**Lack of playgrounds,  
and recreation and play  
equipment**



**Current status of Parks**



**Playground equipment is  
perceived as run down or  
outdated**



### **Community driven actions derived from those statements;**

- Provide maintenance of parks and reserve (i.e., weeding, planting, clearing litter, cleaning).
- Provide upgrades, expansions and maintenance of playgrounds
- Facilitate the development of more recreational opportunities and play equipment in parks and reserves (i.e., flying foxes, play-houses, basketball courts, exercise equipment, BMX trails, hit-up walls, water parks, scooter and bike paths, skate parks, natural play equipment and bush-walking trails).
- Provide more shade in parks and playgrounds.
- Provide more picnic amenities and areas in parks and reserves such as barbeques, benches, shaded open spaces and water fountains.
- Facilitate the development of more parks and reserves.

In general, the existing playground equipment stock is not maintained with older playgrounds being in an unserviceable condition. Many of the Shires playgrounds have been deemed non-compliant with the new Australian standards. In the past, there has not been a sufficient replacement schedule or budget to ensure that equipment was replaced within a reasonable timeframe, and this has now left the Shire with a stock of ageing play equipment that requires a higher level of maintenance, or is unserviceable.

Failure to maintain assets or fund reserve for replacement of asset, or to consider catchment areas has resulted in duplication, and a large stock of fully depreciated (poor condition) constituting the main stock of this asset group. In addition, the play value and interest offered by the existing playgrounds are generally far below what should be expected and what can be provided with contemporary materials and design approaches.

## Cultural Environment

### Importance of Play

Play and recreation are of great importance to the physical, social, cognitive, creative and emotional development of children. Children represent the future of society, and planning for quality play environments is therefore seen as an investment in the future. In the past, it has been considered sufficient to provide structured playgrounds with limited ancillary facilities such as a seat and bin.

It is now recognised that, although structured play equipment is a useful play element within a park, it does not satisfy all the play needs of children. The lack of quality design and the proliferation of generic playgrounds with little regard for site-specific conditions, ancillary facilities and play value mean that the Shire is left with unremarkable and uninteresting play spaces.

Children are the group to whom the provision of quality open space is possibly the most significant. They are heavily dependent upon local opportunities, as they cannot travel far from home. The quality of the physical environment in which play takes place has a great impact upon the quality of the activities and their significance for the child.

Play and playgrounds are becoming increasingly important to the development of children's minds and bodies, so creating future play spaces that are safe, creative and fun for all ages is essential. The overall design of playgrounds now has to

consider much more than just placing a piece of equipment into a space. It must consider a range of issues that have numerous design implications

Play areas, which provide only structured play equipment, will be used as intended while they provide a challenge. For older children, this may be for a period as short as 10-15 minutes after which the equipment is mastered. It is then that the children will look for more challenging ways to use the equipment not necessarily as intended by the manufacturer or provider. Provision of natural elements with a playground, for example dry creek beds, water features, planting, climbing trees, rocks, art, sound and movement, provide a more attractive and stimulating area for children, as they provide for use of the child's imagination. Provision of such facilities within parks can greatly increase the usability of a park and, if correctly designed, can still provide a 'safe' area for play.

In today's society, childhood obesity is becoming more prevalent, and the importance of physical activity both structured and unstructured has become a focus. This is where play becomes an important area of physical development and providing opportunities for young people to play and get physical, stimulate the imagination, be challenged and most of all have fun.

Variety and diversity are essential requirements when planning for children's play. Therefore, it is important to ensure a balance is achieved when designing playgrounds between the physical and experiential.

## Planning for young people

There is a realisation that the changing youth culture is tending towards young people being more mobile and independent at younger ages. It is not unusual for groups to select a central meeting place that is accessible by pushbikes.

Spaces could be identified and developed in such a way as to suggest some adult intervention without necessarily trying to make full provision that may be inappropriate or unwanted. Some of these spaces may be short term, such as over a holiday period, or more permanent.

In order to maximise the opportunities for young people, these spaces should be linked to other areas of activity if possible including shops, public transport routes, skate facilities, natural areas and other structured recreation linkages such as cycle paths and linear parks. It should be noted that, at this age, a degree of separation from overt adult supervision is desirable for young people, and these issues should be regarded genuinely but innovatively in the designation of space and its ensuring design.

## Integrated art

The inclusion of public art in some form, which is integrated with the theme of the design and enhances the play experiences, should be a consideration at all playgrounds. Public art in the form of murals, sculptures etc can greatly enhance the

aesthetics and individuality of playgrounds. Opportunities for interpretation of local history or local dominant culture should be identified where possible, including community art outcomes.

For regional playgrounds, it is recommended that there is employment of an artist to design or craft art components of the playground in conjunction with the playground designer. Involvement of children in contributing or being involved in the design of the art component should be a priority.

**Ancestry - Ranked by size**

RDA Kimberley - Total persons (Usual residence)		2016	
Ancestry	Number	%	Regional WA %
Australian	11,661	33.9	39.9
Australian Aboriginal	8,271	24.1	3.1
English	8,079	23.5	39.4
Not Stated	4,530	13.2	10.3
Irish	2,194	6.4	8.7
Scottish	1,979	5.8	8.8
German	868	2.5	3.3
Italian	640	1.9	3.6
Chinese	452	1.3	0.8
Filipino	371	1.1	1.3

Show all (125 entries)

Excludes ancestries with fewer than 10 responses (multi-response).

## Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the design of future playgrounds takes into account a holistic play space development model that provides a balance of play experiences relevant to the type of playground being developed
2. It is recommended to consider the provision of spaces for youth that encourages unstructured outdoor activity relevant to the type of playground being developed.
3. It is recommended that playground design and provision maximise local character and cultural references through the inclusion of an integrated art component relevant to the type of playground being developed.





## Nature Environment

### Importance of Play

In the past, when new residential areas were developed, sites designated for recreational areas were often parcels of land unsuitable for housing development due to topography, access, shape and size.

The suitability of a site for recreation development in relation to topography, access, shape and size, needs to be considered at the planning/development stage, to ensure council does not accept sites unsuitable for such development. If council accepts such a site, it will be responsible for continuing maintenance without necessarily having a site suitable for the provision of recreation facilities.

Therefore, there is an opportunity for council to work with future developers to ensure adequate supply of suitable play provision in new land release areas. The developer partnership may take the form of playgrounds developed as part of the residential developments or by way of financial contribution to council to assist in providing appropriate playgrounds for the population of the new area. The developers may provide the playground in order to enhance the marketability of their new estate.

Many developers now include some form of community facility developments in order to create a point of difference selling point. Difficulties arise if these provisions are tokenistic, as

the facility will eventually become the responsibility of council. Given that council will eventually assume the responsibility for all public playgrounds, it is vital that private sector developers are required to conform to the same standards and guidelines as council initiated playground development. It is important that consultation takes place with developers planning playgrounds to ensure that they are in the best location and provide different types of play experiences to any nearby council playground.

### Recommendations

It is recommended to prepare a proactive approach to supporting private sector provision of play in new development areas. It should;

- Liaise with developers to ensure compliance with design principles and standards when developing playgrounds;
- Engage in partnership with developers, landscape architects and playground designers to design new playgrounds proposed within a structure plan where such a contribution exists.
- Continue to identify playground requirements in new grown areas using local structure plan procedures to develop/fund playgrounds.

## Demographic

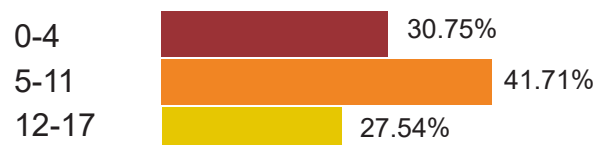
Demographics of an area should be investigated prior to planning a playground to ensure that facilities are provided in the most appropriate area of the municipality. In areas with a large percentage of young children, it is desirable to provide play areas within approximately 1000M walking distance from residential areas.

In the target age groups, 2016 statistics identify;

### Age structure - Service age groups

RDA Kimberley - Total persons (Usual residence)		2016	
Service age group (years)	Number ↕	% ↕	Regional WA % ↕
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	2,961	8.6	6.7
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	4,017	11.7	9.8
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	2,652	7.7	7.4

The age structure of our regional currently demonstrates a high percentage of 5-11 year old, statistically



## Recommendations

It is recommended that plans to meet demographic and growth areas and provide sufficient variation in playground provision between sites by;

- Ensuring planned playgrounds meet the needs of the community mix of children's age groups;
- Ensuring that there is no duplication of facilities within any local area;
- Consider major barriers when calculating playground allocations.

## Hierarchy and Distribution

There are many factors that influence whether a particular space is suitable for development as a play space. The establishment of a hierarchy of parks takes into account the different kinds of parks that will be used in different ways and require different planning and design approaches. This is dependent upon:

- How far people have to travel to use them (catchment area);
- How they travel (foot, car and bike);
- The size of the space;
- The kind of setting and experience it offers; and,
- The location.

A dilemma facing council relates to the increased mobility of the population being balanced with a desire to encourage less car usage. By providing quality local spaces, car usage can be reduced. It is desirable to develop a hierarchy whereby local playgrounds provide basic play opportunities to occupy children for a limited time of up to one hour. Neighbourhood and regional spaces reflect greater ambition in the challenges provided and greater amenity to provide for longer stays thus encouraging return visits.



## Classification

Three potential categories of playground exist, and the use of these categories provides definition to assist in planning and design requirement for structured play equipment.

Category	Distribution Preference	Budget range to construct	Budget range to upgrade
Local	500m radius or 5-10min walk	up to \$100,000	30,000 - 50,000
Neighbourhood	1km radius or 10 min walk	\$100,000 - \$500,000	\$80,000 - \$100,000
Regional	3km radius or drive to location	\$500,000+	\$80,000 - \$120,000

In planning the distribution of the playgrounds in our town sites, a key goal is to maximise the chances of any area within the town having access to one or more playgrounds within the distances outlined above in table one. When circles are drawn on a map representing these distances, gaps should be minimal. There will be, however, sections of the town which are better catered for than others, as there is not an even distribution of suitable and accessible parks across Kununurra and Wyndham.

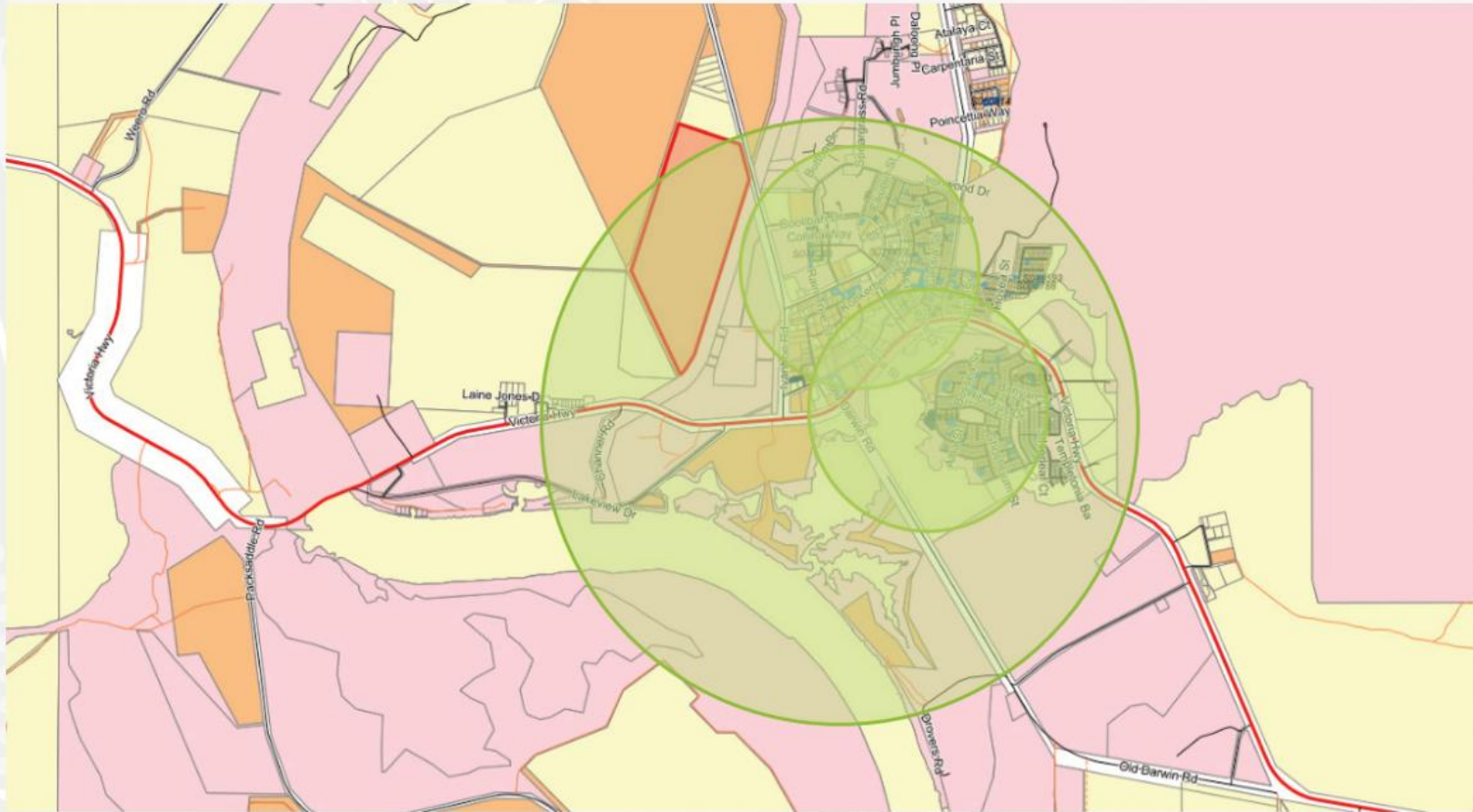
As part of assessing appropriate distribution, the locations of major access barriers such as main roads and waterways are also considered. This may mean that, in some circumstances, playgrounds will be located closer to each other than a straight line 1000m. In practice, the proposed playground hierarchy and distribution criteria maximises the chance that every resident and their children/grandchildren have easy access to playgrounds, while ensuring that council is not managing an excessive number of facilities. It also enables council to offer a variety of playground design styles and to ensure diversity of play experiences.

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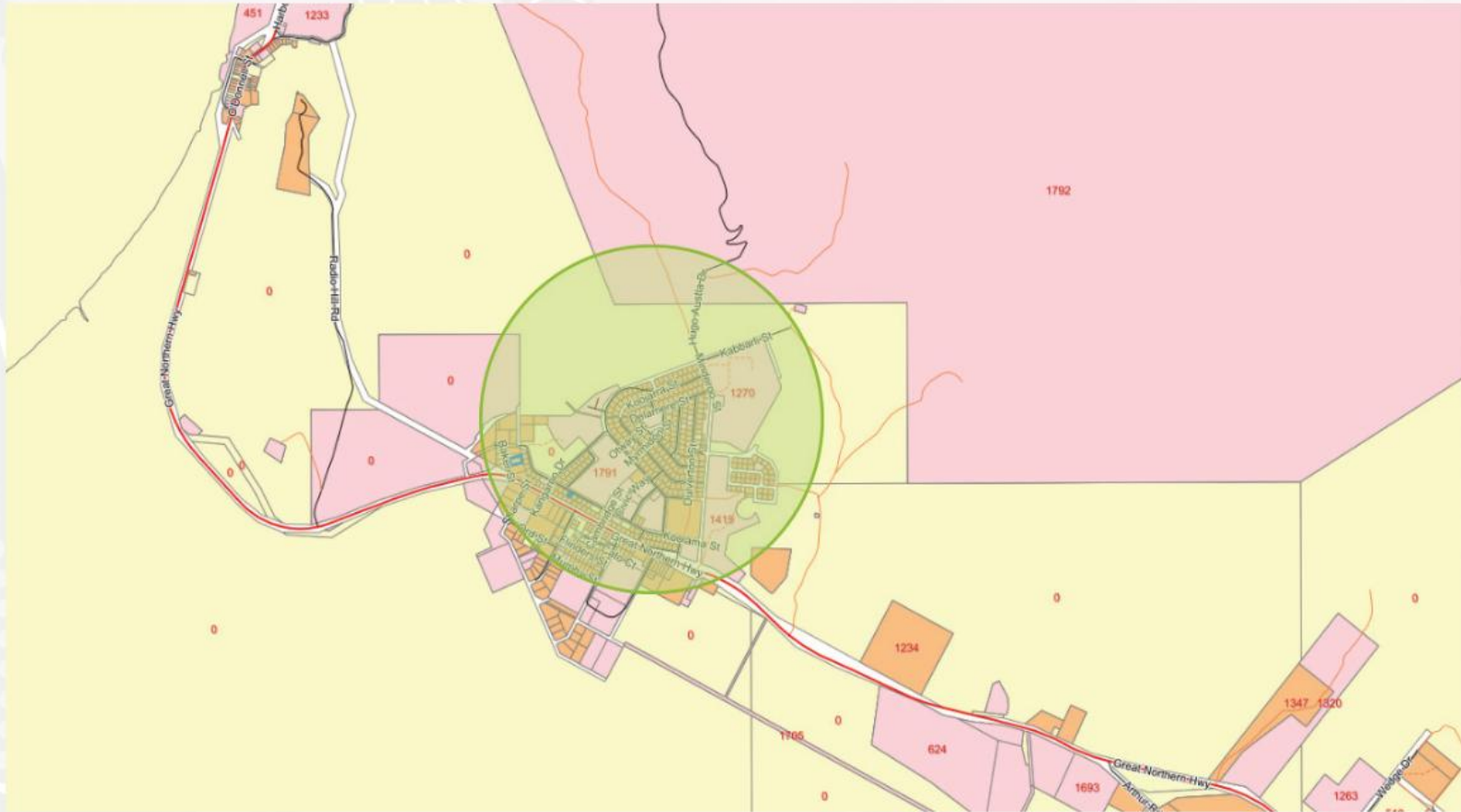






*Provision of a Regional playground at Celebrity Tree Park, a neighbourhood youth area adjacent to the pool location, and neighbourhood at green space West of the intersection of Milkwood Street and Casuarina Way, provides variety, and good coverage to the Kununurra town site.*





*Provision of a Neighbourhood playground in Denman Street, offers a good central location that has passive oversight from adjacent properties, without duplication.*

Sites selected for playgrounds should be large enough to allow for the provision of a play structure, open space, ancillary facilities and natural play area whilst ensuring that adjoining properties will not be unduly affected by the future playground. Sufficient area should be allowed to provide screen planting for adjoining properties, where necessary, and adequate distance from residents to play areas to ensure the impact of noise is not a future problem. The other important thing to consider is the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles which include passive surveillance of the area from surrounding properties and maintaining that surveillance, where possible, to reduce problems such as vandalism and undesirable behaviour.

It is desirable to have playground sites, particularly local parks, at least 5000 square metres in area to allow for the provision of the above. As the requirements and user needs become greater, larger sites will be needed.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended to adopt a system of playground hierarchy that will provide for the local, neighbourhood and regional needs of the community.

Regional playgrounds should be large spaces with specially designed play spaces featuring a diversity of play opportunities and relevant support services to meet the needs of people arriving by car.

Neighbourhood playgrounds should provide a range of play experiences and be supported by adequate services. Local playgrounds should meet the needs of the immediate local community.

## Regional Parks

Regional parks tend to be sited where a special feature, whether natural or man made, attracts people from a wide area including outside the municipality. It is assumed that visitors stay longer and are attracted to experiences not available elsewhere in the playground network. Large regional play spaces are important social places for family outings or occasional visits. Regional playgrounds should be:

- Prominent;
- Free to access;
- Central to the population they serve;
- Positioned strategically in relation to other similar facilities;
- Accessible to public transport and served by a shared pathway;
- A choice of seamless routes around the space and to the activities;
- Supportive of parents and carers as they watch their children playing;
- Accessible to amenities such as toilets, car parks and shelters; and,
- Offering clear and logical relationships between activities.

Kununurra currently has a potential regional park site at Celebrity Tree Park. The play areas could consist of several different areas catering for varying age groups. These could also include amenities such as picnic tables, barbecues, toilets and shelters. The budget would be \$500,000+ which includes the cost for amenities to be upgraded and/or increased in size to cater for potential user numbers.

## Recommendations

It is recommended to adopt Celebrity Tree Park as a regional playground site.

And that

- It forms part of a master plan for Celebrity Tree Park
- Is inclusive for age groups up to 17 years
- Is built in stages as funding is available
- Capital budget reflects an annual contribution each year over the next 5 years for capital construction of park in the location, or seed funding for suitable grants.





## Neighbourhood Parks

Neighbourhood parks comprise the next level above the local park in the park hierarchy. These tend to be larger than local parks and offer a different level of provision of facilities or other settings for play and recreation. It is assumed that people will travel further to use a neighbourhood park and their modes of transport may differ.

These parks tend to be designed to meet the needs of more than the user for more than one type of activity ie: adjacent to a sporting field, sited around a picnic shelter and tables or set up along a waterway offering a natural setting for walks and observing wildlife habitat. They may also include existing toilets and barbecues. These parks cater for larger community areas with a minimum size of 1500 square metres and generally cater for travel within a one to three kilometre radius.

A mix of vehicle, cycle and pedestrian visits are most common modes of transport to this site. The budget for these types of playgrounds within the existing parks would be \$100,000 to \$500,000 to develop.

## Recommendations

It is recommended to adopt the following as neighbourhood playground sites,

- Foreshore area, West of the intersection of Milkwood Street and Casuarina Way, Kununurra
- Denman Street, Wyndham







## Local Parks

This level of park, primarily a small pocket of land, caters for small neighbourhood areas. They are located within walking distance of approximately 500 metres from home and are intended to provide for the everyday play and recreation needs of children, as a matter of priority. However, they should not exclude other park users.

These parks need to be developed as a network which provides varying settings for the everyday needs of children and their carers. They should be close to home and the outdoor recreational needs of the elderly and other community members and act as a visual relief and 'breathing space' in a built neighbourhood for people of all ages. In addition, local parks often contribute to:

- The close-to-home play requirements of older children;
- Spontaneous group activities such as ball games;
- Physical links to other open space systems (if well designed); and,
- Wildlife habitat.

The way a park is designed can either create or

limit options for multiple uses. Priority must be given to those most dependent upon a particular space i.e., those with the fewest options to go elsewhere. Young children, the elderly and people with disabilities are thus considered to be priority users because of their mobility and restricted options.

Each local park needs to be developed to complement the others in its neighbourhood. Each should present its own setting by offering a different set of opportunities from parks nearby. Each local park should provide some seating for people to sit and supervise their children.

## Recommendations

It is recommended to review current parks and playgrounds, and decommission local playground equipment where overlap occurs, or there is no population catchment. This strategy document to guide development in future for location and type of playground provision due to development of population expansion.





## **Amenities**

### **Seating and Supervision**

The provision of comfort areas for adults/caregivers can increase the usability of a playground as it encourages users to stay longer. It can also lead to a reduction of vandalism and accidents as it encourages an adult presence in the playground.

Seating should be provided in areas to allow easy viewing of the playground, especially in play areas catering for toddlers, as well as considering climatic aspects such as shade and protection from strong winds. Seats in close proximity to the play areas should also be included.

Picnic tables are not always necessary in a reserve. They may however be useful if sited so that adults can supervise children while seated. The shape of the tables needs to be considered and their orientation both for the comfort of users and for ease of supervision. Hexagonal or octagonal tables allow parents to change their position and keep an eye on children in any direction.

### **Toilets**

Consideration will be given to providing toilet facilities in larger regional playgrounds and areas with numerous recreation uses, such as sporting grounds, barbecues and picnic facilities where users will be attracted from a wider area. Toilet facilities, which are maintained regularly, are more likely to be used by the general community. Regular use by the general community will discourage inappropriate use.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended to adopt an approach that addresses the needs of carers through the provision of appropriate amenities.

## **Shades**

Provision of shade in playground areas is becoming an increasingly important aspect of design as the community becomes more aware of the impact of exposure to the sun. As a consequence, there is an increased expectation that shade and shelter will be provided in and around play areas.

Shade structures are expensive to install and, with limited available funding, their non-targeted installation will detract from the play value and quality of new or upgraded playground facilities. Shade structures can also be prone to vandalism, thus placing pressure on council's playground maintenance budget.

Where possible, it is desirable for sites selected for playground development to have existing trees to provide shade or a plan for the planting of new trees. Council will consider the installation of shade structures over playgrounds on a site by site basis, and then only at larger neighbourhood and district playgrounds. Where shade structures are deemed necessary, consideration should be given to integrating them with other park shelters and picnic facilities. Council considers this issue to be a joint responsibility between carers and the Shire.

As an overall approach to dealing with the hazards of solar radiation, council endorses the Sun Smart guidelines of the Cancer Council of Western Australia and recognises that carers should not rely solely on council to provide shade and shelter from the sun and should consider and implement sun smart practices such as:

- Ensuring children (and carers) wear adequate protective clothing and hats;
- Ensuring sunscreen is applied and re applied; and,
- Timing visits to playgrounds where possible to avoid the hottest parts of the day.

Council can play a role in encouraging these key messages to the community through education and signage.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended to adopt an approach that addresses the needs of carers through the provision of appropriate amenities.

## Recommendations

It is recommended to adopt a strategy that supports shade provision wherever possible for playgrounds through tree planting. It should;

- Consider the location of playgrounds in relation to existing mature shade trees;
- Consider strategic planting of trees on parks and reserves identified for future playgrounds;
- Consider advanced grown trees for those playgrounds that lack appropriate shade;
- Consider the relationship between shade and seating for caregivers and children;
- Include a section on Sunsmart principles in any publications that list available playgrounds and where possible on signage;
- Wherever possible utilise shade trees to meet Sunsmart objectives and consider installation of shade structures on a case by case basis.





## Accessibility Principles

All children need to play for all the same social, biological, emotional and physical reasons regardless of their age or ability. This is where social inclusion, universal design and accessibility in playgrounds come to the fore, and all three need to be carefully considered when designing play spaces within Wyndham East Kimberley.

- Social Inclusion is a philosophy which stresses the need to accommodate and value equally all people regardless of race religion, ability, culture or gender within all social structures and community functions in our society.
- Universal design is a design philosophy which stresses the need to try and accommodate all potential users in the one design solution.
- Accessibility is a broader issue than just simply providing physical access into a playground. Consideration must be given towards 'experience for all'. This does not imply that all things must be accessible to all people. Consideration, however, must be given to people with disabilities having, not just physical, access to sites but also access to experiences and challenges within them.

The playground strategy will endeavour to use the concepts of universal design as a basis for playground development within the Shire. This will ensure that accessibility is improved at all playgrounds as they are constructed or upgraded.

While all playgrounds should maximise accessible design, it is recognised that council has to operate within budgetary constraints and, as such, the larger regional and neighbourhood playgrounds will enable the inclusion of more comprehensive accessible designs and equipment ranges suitable for children and carers with a broad range of disabilities than smaller local scale playgrounds.

## Easy access

Playgrounds should be easily accessible to all – strollers, wheelchairs, etc.

Carers should also be considered in relation to the design of playgrounds. If children and young people are the targets users, it is necessary to consider how they might get there and who they might go with and how council might accommodate their needs. If the needs of the carers or users are not met, then the length of stay will be limited.

Pathways should be provided to allow access to all parks and play areas. The pathways provided may serve a dual purpose, such as a dinky (bike) track for smaller children. However, it is necessary in such cases that design measures be implemented to clearly define pedestrian areas and potential bike tracks to avoid potential conflicts.

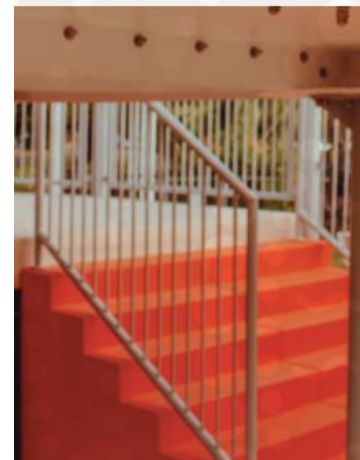
Future consideration needs to be given to linking play areas through a walking or bicycle network. This would make it possible to create a play adventure, not just single isolated playgrounds. This creates the idea of extended or progressive play along council cycle paths and should be considered in the overall

program of works.

There are at least three levels of accessibility which are relevant to playground design. These include:

- Access to the reserve – barrier free routes to the reserve from residential areas require footpaths, kerb crossings and safe pedestrian crossing;
- Access into the reserve – common barriers include level changes at park entry, inaccessible fence design, rough loose paths or soft muddy/grassy surfaces; and,
- Access to the amenities of the reserve – inaccessible seating, inaccessible play equipment and mulched play areas and inaccessible toilets, barbecues, tables or shelters.

It is recommended that all new developments should be designed for accessibility at all three levels.







## Recommendations

It is recommended to ensure reasonable access to playground sites and a meaningful play experience for children and carers through, and subject to, the relevant playground type. These include;

- Pathways to playgrounds that meet Australian Standards;
- Location of car parking in relation to the playground;
- Disabled parking in relation to the playground;
- Accessible paths around and through the site;
- Stable soft fall surface to facilitate wheeled and easy ambulatory movement;
- Heights and positioning of sensory elements and planting in relation to access pathways;
- Auditory and tactile elements to ensure experiences for children with vision impairment;
- Australian Standards being met.

## Built Environment

### Framework for the provision of playground

It is important to recognise that playground equipment has a lifespan of 10 – 15 years and that current design approaches to playground provision focuses on building upon the uniqueness of specific sites, landscape features and the community's needs and aspirations. Therefore, playground provision should not be undertaken in isolation from the planning of community facilities and open space planning. To avoid ad hoc provision, master planning for a 5-10 year period should form the basis for decisions regarding amalgamation, upgrading and closure of playgrounds.

As part of establishing a strategic framework for the provision of playgrounds, the following guidelines reflect current thinking on playground provision and should provide the basis to review the appropriateness of existing playgrounds.

- Is the location accessible ie: what are the major barriers to access (major roads, waterways, railways)?
- Factors that assist access (crossing points, public transport, pathways).
- Size of site and any nearby play opportunities that exist.
- Attractors or unique qualities that may draw people to

the site.

- The range of age groups to be serviced by the playground or play space.
- Profile of the site, community awareness, visibility and its location in relation to major roads, community infrastructure, sporting activities etc.
- Demographics of the surrounding and local area. Where there are many young children, there will be a greater need for playgrounds and play spaces.
- Quality of the landscape, site vegetation, shade and amenities that encourages children and families to visit.
- Where there are two playgrounds within one park, consider consolidating them into one playground when upgrading is required.

### Priority Guidelines

Guidelines are required to enable competing playground priorities to be assessed. Priority guidelines will support resource allocations. The following guidelines form the basis for prioritising provision.

- Demographic profile – number of children and teenagers.
- Safety aspects of existing playgrounds.
- Requests from residents for improvements to playground provision (customer requests).
- Age, condition and functionality of equipment; deterioration.

## Method and approach to removing nominated playground equipment

The removal of a playground from a reserve does not mean that the park or reserve is lost to the community. In our town sites, there are already parks that do not contain playgrounds which are valuable open spaces for the local community.

Prior to removal of a nominated playground from a park, a sketch landscape design will be undertaken to plan possible future improvements to the park. Some parks may require new paths, seats or picnic tables. Other parks may be better suited to tree planting; thus, reinstating the area left by the playground for 'kick to kick' or 'muck about' space which may have not been previously possible. The designs for the park would be tailored to the needs of the local area and conditions.

Local residents surrounding the parks where playgrounds are to be removed will be notified of the proposal explaining the reasons and rationale for the removal of the playground. The residents will be notified of possible landscape improvement works and be given the opportunity to provide feedback.



## Recommendations

It is recommended to undertake a process to establish the feasibility of decommissioning the following playgrounds and using these spaces for alternate uses i.e., kick space.

### *Kununurra*

- Swim Beach
- Argentea Street Park
- White Gum Skate Park
- Kununurra Swimming Pool equipment
- Nicholson Park

### *Wyndham*

- Bessie Wylie Park
- Wyndham Sport Oval
- St Pauls Way
- Wyndham Swimming Pool equipment



# Social Environment

## Community Involvement

Appropriate community consultation is important in ensuring that the design of playgrounds responds to the wishes of the local community and users. By inviting input into such things as playgrounds' equipment mix and uses, council will provide facilities which better meet the needs of the local community as well as fostering a greater sense of ownership.

The type and extent of community consultation should, however, reflect the size and type of playground being installed. That is, a large complex facility will require greater community consultation than a small local facility with a limited mix of equipment.

## Internal processes/ departmental communication

It is important that council has good internal communication to ensure that maximum strategic advantage is gained for playgrounds by:

- Setting realistic capital works funding;
- Ensuring holistic play/sport/open space

- planning;
- Linking with cultural/arts opportunities within council; and,
- Developing well designed playgrounds using contribution and provisions from developers.

## Playground design process

Community consultation is an integral part of developing open space for public use and can assist in:

- Determining community aspirations;
- Informing of proposed or desirable developments;
- Expanding perceptions of what is possible;
- Generating support for proposed development;
- Encouraging community discussion, debate and dissension;
- Keeping the community informed; and,
- Advocating for the rights of children.

The extent of community consultation on any given project will vary depending upon factors including:

- The size of the development;
- The location of the development;
- The budget;
- Possible cultural and social implications; and,
- Possible environmental implications.

The process should include some or all of the following steps:

- Notification of intention to develop;
- Review of the demographic information and population projections;
- Public meeting/focus groups/working groups (for large projects);
- Display of initial concept plan in public viewing area for predetermined time;
- Provision for community comment; and,
- Display of revised concept plans preparation of final plans.

## Social Environment

### Opportunities for young people

As council comes to make improved provision for children, it has become apparent that one of the next challenges is the provision of appropriate facilities for young people. As children develop greater independence and a capacity to move throughout their domain with greater confidence, they will seek to identify places for meeting and 'hanging out'.

There are a number of elements that the Shire can provide to initiate gathering places for young people, and these include skate parks, half courts, seating shelters and new playground elements for teenagers. The success of these elements depends heavily on the site criteria. To guarantee the site's success as a 'hangout', the following is important:

- Located near activity/transport nodes;
- Separated from but next to activity areas; and,
- Designed as safe locations.

There should always be community consultation, and particularly consultation with young people, in the design of any space development or upgrade for youth. The consultation with young people should include:

- Design workshops;
- Involvement in location selection;
- Consideration of transport options;
- Proximity to services; and,
- Suitable balance between surveillance and secluded site surroundings.

### Recommendation

It is recommended to encourage opportunities for the community to participate in the design process associated with the planning of playgrounds and amenities on appropriate redevelopment. This should be achieved by;

- Informing the local community of intentions to redevelop/develop playgrounds;
- Seeking feedback on community aspirations through public meetings/focus groups/working groups;
- Public displaying of concept plans to seek feedback, and;
- Displaying final plans
- Consult with young people in the design of any space development or upgrade focused on young people



## Economic Environment

### Budget considerations

A playground budget has been developed for a ten year period and works to replace much of the aging playground infrastructure that currently exists throughout the shire. It has also been developed to reflect the planning for new playgrounds in growth areas across the Shire into the future as well as the upgrades needed in some playgrounds.

The proposed budget has figures that are a rudimentary estimation only. Opportunities to apply for funding of development or renewal of playgrounds should be actively pursued.

### Recommendation

It is recommended that Council adopts the 10 year plan and timelines and;

- Investigates opportunities for grant funding of playground locations;
- Makes annual contribution to enact the 10 year plan.

## Maintenance, inspections and auditing

To ensure safety remains the highest priority and to demonstrate council's duty of care, suitable inspection and auditing processes need to be planned and implemented. The frequency of internal site inspections by council staff will be determined by relevant playground standards and guidelines at and absolute minimum.

External audits by a suitably qualified and experienced person are conducted on a 4 year basis, for safety reasons. These inspections are intended to identify any equipment that does not meet Australian Standards, review current internal maintenance and inspection practices, and provide advice and recommendations on future equipment maintenance and replacement needs.

The practice of documenting the maintenance history of playgrounds and ancillary facilities in case of future playground incident or upgrade is critical. This will also provide an asset number, amount and replacement amount as well as providing written proof in litigation cases where an injury has occurred.

A playground maintenance program will need to be implemented and form part of the operational plan for playgrounds in the Shire that ensures safe play areas for children. This includes appropriate soft fall, removal of damaged/worn parts and replacement or upgrade of aging equipment.

Appropriate maintenance and replacement funding per annum is required for this to occur and to protect council's capital investments by maintaining assets to a satisfactory standard. The concept of risk is often interpreted in terms of hazards or negative impacts. Risk management of play spaces involves the systematic application of management, policies, procedures and practices. Council will operate in accordance with the Australian standards.

Risk and opportunity assessments will be undertaken on all new and upgraded playgrounds at various stages in the development/upgrade. A risk management checklist for playgrounds will also be used on any non compliances identified in the annual audit, in order to prioritise maintenance work.

## Recommendation

It is recommended to implement a high level of maintenance safety reviews on its playgrounds by;

- Implementing a formal system of inventory, independent audit and in house inspections
- Action removal of non compliant and/or dangerous equipment
- Train appropriate staff to provide high levels of safety and maintenance
- Use risk assessments on all new and upgraded playgrounds
- Use risk assessments on all existing non compliances to prioritise works, and;
- Implement maintenance, operational and capital works budgets on an annual basis





## Minimising maintenance

It is important that council staff ensures that sound design principles are considered when new playgrounds are constructed to minimise future maintenance. These principles include simple design decisions such as locating a slide into the side of a slope so that it significantly reduces the fall height as well as requiring less soft fall which therefore requires less maintenance. The regular raking and maintaining of loose soft fall surfaces and required depths is an important and time consuming task. The cost can be minimised through judicious use of wet pour surfaces under high scuff equipment such as swings and spinning elements. Council can utilise a combination of both options within a single play space.

In addition, wet pour surfaces allow for wheelchairs and strollers to be wheeled close to equipment so there can be access by people with a mobile disability or a carer with a young child in a stroller has close supervision of children at play.

Council maintenance staff should also be consulted as to landscape and drainage issues associated with proposed playground siting and design that could have an impact on future maintenance costs.

Whenever possible, Council should fund the

use/installation of wet pour surfaces for all newly developed regional and neighbourhood playgrounds. It should plan and budget for the systematic replacement of soft fall material with wet pour surfaces in existing neighbourhood and regional playgrounds.

## Recommendation

It is recommended that all new playground designs and proposed equipment provision minimise maintenance and consider options for ground cover through sound design principles such as;

- Relationship between equipment and topography of site to ensure appropriate soft fall options are achieved;
- Drainage and land fall to ensure minimum wash away and pooling problems are experienced;
- Orientation of site to ensure favourable growing conditions of plantings, and;
- Whole of life costing comparisons between loose soft fall and wet pour surfaces.



## Graffiti and Vandalism

Graffiti in public spaces can cause great concern to members of the public and those responsible for the maintenance of the area. For many, graffiti is a symbol of desecration and, if left, is indicative of neglect and lack of civic pride.

Vandalism is a complex issue. However, a prime deterrent is to make parks attractive to a large number of legitimate users whose presence will deter those with less legitimate intentions. Siting parks and structures where there is a high level of supervision or passive surveillance from nearby residents, passing pedestrians or motorists also works to reduce the likelihood of vandalism and graffiti. One way of increasing surveillance is to relocate playgrounds to an area close to sheltered areas with the ability to be seen by passing motorists and pedestrians, and provision of CCTV.

Constant and quick repairs after damage or graffiti will reduce the impression that the municipality does not care about its reserves and reduce opportunity for further damage/graffiti.

One of the strongest deterrents to vandalism and graffiti is community ownership. There is clear evidence that where the local community, including young people, has been meaningfully involved in the planning and design, vandalism is reduced. It is important to note, however, that neither the consultation process nor thoughtful design outcome can totally eliminate vandalism and graffiti.

## Recommendation

It is recommended that playground planning design should consider graffiti and vandalism minimisation principles. These principles include;

- The location of playgrounds should, wherever possible, allow for passive surveillance as a deterrent to vandals;
- Lighting near playgrounds to be considered as appropriate;
- Involve the community and especially local young people in the consultation process associated with the design of new playgrounds;
- Where there has been vandalism, equipment should be removed or repaired immediately as there present a safety hazard;
- Where damage or unsightly graffiti has been identified, it should be dealt with as rapidly as possible to ensure users are not deterred from visiting the playground in the future, and;
- Funds should be allocated to ensure timely removal and replacement of equipment due to vandalism.





## Conclusion

### Current Status

Inspection indicates that playground equipment is generally held in a low maintenance state, with no maintenance to soft fall zones, little to minor maintenance to equipment breaks and no current replacement program. With no planned budget for maintenance there is no capacity for repair to structures when they fail.

Currently, the shire owns a number of non-compliant playgrounds, as reported February 2014;

#### Wyndham

*i. I would recommend directing most of the playground maintenance budget for the Wyndham area into St Pauls Way playground as it sees the highest use, is in the newest condition, besides some minor vandalism, is under cover and complies with AS4685.xx*

*ii. I would recommend removing the Denman St, Bessie Wylie and the Wyndham Sports Oval playgrounds as these are in a non-compliant state. The equipment used at the Denman St playground has not seen any maintenance for a number of years and has become run down, this along with poor layout adds to the high risk for injury.*

*iii. The Wyndham Swimming Pool playground would be better to replace with a supervised early childhood playground/area, including equipment designed for younger players and a shaded area for parents to supervise. There must be soft fall for this area. The soft fall for this area would better suit shredded rubber mulch like the Celebrity Tree playground in Kununurra.*

*iv. The playground located at Bessie Wylie park must have soft fall installed under both the combination unit as well as the swing set. The set out for the combination units slide as well as the swing set are compromised by the garden containment border. These would have to be re-located as not to encroach into the play area. The equipment in this playground is pre AS4685 and would probably be best to retire.*

*v. The equipment located in the Wyndham Sports Oval must have soft fall. It should be removed, unless soft fall is installed and maintained. The equipment is in good condition but without soft fall is non-compliant with AS4685 and poses high risk for injury, as the equipment includes forced movement i.e Teeter Totter and Hang glide monorail.*

#### Kununurra

*i. A soft fall maintenance program should be implemented at all playgrounds with soft fall.*

*ii. Regular visual maintenance inspection.*

### A planned approach

Subject to endorsement of this strategy, enactment must be rolled out in such a way to mitigate risk to the community, and reputation risk to the Council.



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